



**EMBARGOED NEWS RELEASE**

Embargoed for 1:45 p.m. Eastern (10:45 a.m. Pacific),  
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Contact: Peter L. Kelley, (202) 270-8831  
Susan Roth, (301) 530-3539

**Dental research group attacks studies that used mercury fillings on children,  
to be published Wednesday in JAMA, as ethically “outrageous”**

***Studies didn’t obtain informed consent, were “designed to fail”  
to detect mercury fillings’ long-term effects on young children***

LOUISVILLE, KY., April 18 – A breakaway group of medical researchers and dentists is filing ethics complaints today with Harvard University, the University of Maine, the University of Washington, and other sponsors of what it terms an “outrageous” human experiment on indigent and orphaned children.

Leading dental researchers and patient advocates of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT) will hold a conference call for medical and science reporters today at 1:45 p.m. Eastern time, saying that two studies of mercury in children’s dental fillings to be published tomorrow in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in their opinion were “unethical and designed to fail.”

In the studies, hundreds of children – public health clinic visitors aged 6 to 10 in New England, and orphans aged 8 to 10 in Portugal – were given mercury-containing dental fillings. They were then monitored for 5 to 7 years for signs of lowered IQ, diminished motor skills, and kidney damage.

“With all the debate in this country over issues surrounding human life and how we value it, we can all surely agree that exposing children to a known neurotoxin is wrong. Flat wrong,” said Dr. David C. Kennedy, DDS. “The people who designed this study should be deeply ashamed of themselves.” He said the group is filing an ethics complaint today with the universities’ Institutional Review Boards, which must approve and monitor any study involving human subjects. The letter of complaint may be seen on the group’s website at [www.iaomt.org](http://www.iaomt.org).

The leaders of the IAOMT say in their opinion the researchers failed to obtain informed consent, since children and their parents were not adequately warned that mercury is suspected in autism, long-term neurological damage and Alzheimer’s disease, or that as much as 25% of the population is genetically predisposed to greater damage. They say in their opinion the studies were “designed to fail” to detect health problems which take much longer to manifest than the life of the studies, among other flaws. Questions about the implications for dentists and patients may be posed to experts on a **press conference call for credentialed journalists only**:

- Time: **1:45 p.m. Eastern (10:45 a.m. Pacific), Tuesday, April 18**
- Call-in info: **To obtain the call-in numbers**, please contact Peter Kelley at (202) 270-8831 or Susan Roth at (301) 530-3539
- Participants: **Dr. Jack Kall, DMD**, chairman of the board of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, [www.iaomt.org](http://www.iaomt.org)  
**Dr. Boyd E. Haley, PhD**, professor and past chairman of chemistry, University of Kentucky, <http://www.chem.uky.edu/research/haley/>  
**Dr. David C. Kennedy, DDS**, past president of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology

(MORE)

## Dental research group attacks ethics of studies that used mercury fillings on children

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A dissenting editorial is to appear along with the studies in tomorrow's *Journal of the American Medical Association*, by Dr. Herbert Needleman, MD, of the University of Pittsburgh, the scientist who in the 1970s detected subtle harm to children from lead. According to an advance copy, Dr. Needleman writes in the editorial that the studies on mercury fillings in children do not address "the delayed effects of early toxic exposure on health later in life, which are a subject of growing interest."

He cites previous research that found "dentists and dental assistants have deficits in motor function and cognitive scores in relation to their number of fillings and to their urinary mercury excretion," also mentioned by the authors of the New England study on children.

Dr. Needleman writes, "It is predictable that some outside interests will expand the modest conclusions of these studies to assert that use of mercury amalgam in dentistry is risk free. This conclusion would be unfortunate and unscientific."

Beyond the inadequate consent obtained and the short time frame studied, IAOMT's experts also criticize the studies on children for:

- limiting their tests of the children's mercury exposure to spot urine tests, and tests of hair (in the New England study), which they said do not adequately measure chronic mercury toxicity (CMT);
- not isolating (or protecting) genetically susceptible populations, or individuals allergic to mercury fillings;
- failing to disclose membership in trade associations that continue to advocate mercury fillings' use;
- failing to disclose a 10-year-long child abuse scandal that rocked the Casa Pia school for orphans in Portugal while one of the studies was conducted there, which could skew the data on neurological impairment; and,
- a high rate of dropouts from the study.

A January 2006 poll by Zogby International found 76% of American adults still don't know that the main ingredient in traditional dental fillings, often misnamed "silver fillings," is mercury. Each contains roughly as much of the toxic heavy metal as an old-fashioned thermometer. They have been in use since before the Civil War, ranking them among the most antiquated medical devices from a bygone era.

In the past 30 years, however, U.S. government reports have documented the toxic effects of small amounts of mercury, resulting in this known neurotoxin being phased out of nearly every facet of manufacturing, consumer products and medical care – except dental fillings.

The dental industry still inserts upwards of 70 million mercury fillings annually in Americans' mouths, totaling some 34 tons of mercury a year, according to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. These fillings are the predominant source of human exposure to mercury, according to the World Health Organization, and no safe level can be established. The new studies on children do confirm this exposure.

Credentialed journalists are invited to discuss the studies on children further with IAOMT's experts at 1:45 p.m. Eastern (10:45 a.m. Pacific) today, Tuesday, April 18. To obtain call-in information, please contact Peter Kelley at (202) 270-8831 or Susan Roth at (301) 530-3539.

*The International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology is a network of dentists, physicians and medical researchers working together to obtain information concerning the latest interdisciplinary scientific research. The IAOMT regularly funds studies by independent medical and scientific researchers. Its members are adamant that dentistry should be based on peer-reviewed science – not on history and tradition. For more information, see <http://www.iaomt.org/infoDoctors.cfm>.*

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